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UNCLAS HARARE 000858

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SUBJECT: ZANU-PF STAGES DEMONSTRATION AGAINST MDC MP ROY BENNETT

REF: A. HARARE 682

[1](#)B. HARARE 634

[1](#)1. (U) SUMMARY: On May 20, ZANU-PF staged a demonstration in downtown Harare against MDC MP Roy Bennett. The demonstration came two days after Bennett assaulted Minister of Justice Patrick Chinamasa in Parliament when the latter commented on the government seizure of Bennett's farm. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (U) According to eyewitnesses, trucks ferried 200 - 300 ZANU-PF supporters to the Parliament building where demonstrators chanted slogans and waved placards saying: "We want the head of Bennett now", "MDC Murderers", "Where is the rule of the law Bennett?" and "Flush Bennett into the Blair toilet". The presidentially appointed governor for Harare, Witness Mangwende addressed the crowd saying Bennett was no longer welcome in Harare province. ZANU-PF Harare Chairman Amos Midzi also thanked the demonstrators. The crowd cheered as Minister of Justice Patrick Chinamasa entered Parliament. Police reportedly looked on.

[1](#)3. (U) The crowd then walked a few blocks to MDC headquarters where eyewitnesses reported that demonstrators attempted to break-in through the front door. The security gates were pulled down, and a minor stone-throwing battle ensued between MDC youths and demonstrators. Police entered MDC headquarters and arrested six MDC youths, carting them away in a police vehicle. A ZANU-PF official addressed the crowd, which dispersed having been in front of MDC offices for about an hour. Police closed Nelson Mandela Avenue (where the MDC is located) during the demonstration.

[1](#)4. (U) The demonstration came two days after Bennett assaulted Minister of Justice Patrick Chinamasa in Parliament. Addressing the full assembly, Chinamasa reportedly said the government would not reverse its decision to acquire Bennett's farm in Chimanimani (Ref B) and that Bennett had forgotten that his forefathers were "thieves and murderers". Reacting to the statements, Bennett charged at Chinamasa and pushed him to the floor. Bennett also punched and floored Anti-Corruption and Anti-Monopolies Minister Didymus Mutasa (69).

[1](#)5. (SBU) On April 9, soldiers, police and war vets seized Bennett's Charleswood Estate in Chimanimani despite five (now six) High Court judgments affirming Bennett's right to the property, and calling for various government officials and other groups to stay away (Refs A, B). Despite problems on the farm, Bennett has been able to source funds for various MDC activities, and there were numerous rumors that he could organize an armed resistance to the government.

Comment:

[1](#)6. (SBU) As the country's only white MP representing a rural area, Bennett was embarrassing proof that the GOZ did not control all of rural Zimbabwe. In addition, unsubstantiated rumors of Bennett-organized guerrillas, and his funding for opposition activities made him top the government's most wanted list. Many observers were abhorred at his behavior in Parliament, but at least an equal number were proud of him. SULLIVAN